

CONSERVATION UPDATE

2009



State Senator

Patty Birkholz

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Dear Friend,

From the fragile beauty of spring wildflowers to the power and majesty of the Great Lakes, Michigan is blessed with an abundance of natural resources. Michigan Conservation Week celebrates our unique natural heritage and the role we have in conserving these cherished resources.

This year's event, which coincides with Earth Day on April 22 and is held April 20 through 26, spotlights e-waste recycling. Senate Republican-led legislation now signed into law helps Michigan residents dispose of their unwanted electronics and saves potentially hazardous materials from ending up in our landfills.

This portion of our proposed recycling package is one more step toward wrapping up the final installment of the Senate's ambitious "Green Michigan Initiative," a plan that includes previous action on protecting our Great Lakes and inland waters, and developing green energy alternatives. I am pleased to update you on some of these efforts.

As we welcome the fresh start of spring, I hope you and your family enjoy all that natural Michigan has to offer!

Sincerely,

Patty Birkholz
State Senator
24th District





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Birkholz legislation provides for e-waste recycling

If you have unwanted computers and monitors sitting in your basement, legislation I sponsored and recently signed into law (Public Acts 392, 393, 394, 395 of 2008) will provide a consumer- and earth-friendly way to dispose of those old, out-of-date electronics, known as e-waste.

The new laws require the manufacturers of computer electronics to put in place a take-back program for the free return of computers, monitors and televisions.

To participate, a manufacturer must register with the state by October 30, 2009. After April 1, 2010, all retailers, including Internet, catalog, direct sales and in-state retailers, can only sell new computers and televisions by those registered manufacturers.

This new electronics recycling program will help keep potentially hazardous material from being dumped in our landfills and conserve the resources used to manufacture new equipment.

For more information on electronics reuse and recycling, including details on the take-back program, visit www.michigan.gov/deq. Click on Pollution Prevention on the left sidebar.



Most Michigan communities provide recycling opportunities for common household items such as paper, plastic, metals and glass. Some offer special events for recycling household hazardous waste such as paint or pesticides. Find out about your local recycling options at www.michigan.gov/deqreswastecontacts.

Birkholz bill to help prevent phosphorus pollution

Michigan waters will be cleaner thanks to new laws designed to reduce the level of phosphorus that ends up in our lakes, rivers and streams.

Public Act 426 of 2008 (SB 362) bans the sale, distribution, or use of any laundry detergent containing more than 0.5 percent of phosphorus.

Public Act 427 of 2008 (SB 152) places the same limits on dishwashing liquids beginning July 1, 2010. The later compliance date gives the industry time to develop effective, low-phosphorus products.

High levels of phosphorus in the water cause excess algae growth, reducing oxygen to plants and animals. Unchecked levels of algae clog water system intakes and can be harmful to public health.



Senator Birkholz supports revision to invasive species list

Earlier this spring, the Senate approved a bill to revise Michigan's list of invasive plants and species.

SB 280 adds new species such as the zebra mussel, round goby, and other kinds of mussels, snails and mollusks to the prohibited list.

The bill also removes the yellow flag iris from the list as it's no longer considered a threat to native plants and habitat. Moreover, the plant's ability to remove metals from wastewater makes it an attractive choice for rainwater gardens.

The legislation awaits action in the House.

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Senate-led work protects Great Lakes

With the Great Lakes Compact now in effect, water diversion outside the Great Lakes basin is banned and common measures are in place to regulate withdrawals within the eight basin states.

Passage of the compact wasn't simple. Legislators and governors from the eight basin states negotiated the compact for more than four years. The Senate spearheaded the effort in Michigan.

Michigan also led the way as the first state to approve a new approach to scrutinizing proposed large quantity water withdrawals in the state to ensure the long term viability of our water resources.

The new rules use a biologically-based method to regulate water usage. Other states are taking a look at our pioneering work as they develop their own water withdrawal laws.

As the sponsor of the compact and water withdrawal legislation, I am extremely proud of our efforts to protect one of our states and our nation's most important assets - the fresh water in our Great Lakes.

Senate legislation encourages downtown trails

Many families enjoy hiking or biking in Michigan's great outdoors. A Senate bill recently enacted into law will bring more opportunities for outdoor recreation closer to home.

Public Act 229 of 2008 (SB 978) directs the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) board to consider trails that intersect downtown areas when funding public recreation projects.

Recreational trails help improve the quality of life in a community and make it a more attractive place to live. They also bring more people downtown, giving the area an important economic boost.



Michigan offers hundreds of miles of trails and pathways used primarily for bicycling, hiking and cross country skiing. Find out more at www.michigan.gov/dnr. Click on Recreation, Camping and Boating on the left sidebar; scroll down to Trails and Pathways.

Michigan Toll-Free Numbers:

Emerald Ash Borer Information.....866-325-0023
Environmental Assistance Center.....800-662-9278
Pollution Emergency Alert800-292-4706
Radon Information.....800-723-6642
Report All Poaching (RAP)800-292-7800



Michigan Recycles! Coloring and Activity Book

Click on the book to learn about recycling with your young child.

Senator Patty Birkholz announces local grants



Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grants (Recommended):

- Allegan County, Casco Township Nature Preserve Phase II, \$668,800
- Barry County, McKeown Bridge Park Development, \$215,300
- Eaton County, Sharp Park East-West Connector, \$244,700

Arbor Day \$200 Mini-Grants:

- Eaton County, City of Eaton Rapids, City of Pottsville, Eaton County Conservation District
- Barry County, Woodland Township, Yankee Springs Township, Pennock Health Services